

# ***IOWA OUTDOORS***

**Iowa Department of Natural Resources**  
**www.iowadnr.com**

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## **DON'T BURN ROADSIDES--PROTECT NESTING COVER**

BOONE - Burning roadsides during February and March can destroy important habitat for many wildlife species in Iowa.

According to Todd Bogenschutz, wildlife research biologist with the Department of Natural Resources, roadsides, grass filter strips along waterways (including drainage ditches), and headlands around agricultural fields provide important nesting, roosting, and escape habitat for pheasants, partridge, ducks, rabbits, and hundreds of different songbirds during the time of year when habitat is very limited.

"Many of these wildlife species begin nesting before spring green-up," said Bogenschutz. Thus most nests are placed in the old dead vegetation that remains from the previous year. Early spring burning eliminates this residual cover. Burning in late spring, May, can destroy nests and the animals themselves. Nesting for most of Iowa's grassland wildlife species begins in late April and early May and runs through late summer.

"Burning can be very beneficial to wildlife if done at the right time and in the right way," he said. Bogenschutz offered suggestions to improve roadsides, waterways, etc. through burning:

1. Avoid early burns, during February and March, that eliminates residual cover and encourage exotic cool season grasses and noxious weeds.

2. Burning between April 1 and April 20 encourages native grasses and discourages exotic cool season species and weeds. Native species provide better habitat for wildlife and prevent the invasion of noxious weed species because of their rank growth and deep root systems. April burns encourage remnant native grasses and do not impact ground nesting birds, such as pheasants, as most ground nesting birds do not initiate nests until late April and early May.
3. Conduct rotational burns. Rotational burning is the practice of burning separate portions of the roadside or ditch in different years. This rejuvenates the grasses in the burned segment, while the unburned segment provides undisturbed nesting and escape habitat for wildlife. A popular scenario is to burn one side of the ditch one year and the other side the next year.

Some state and county agencies provide information for implementing roadside management practices. Contact your local county conservation board to find out more about roadside vegetation management programs in your area. If your county does not have a roadside program, ask them to start one, or contact your local wildlife biologist for more information.

**For more information, contact Bogenschutz at 515-432-2823.**

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## **DNR TO HOST PUBLIC MEETING APRIL 3 ON PROPOSED WILDLIFE RULES**

DES MOINES – The Iowa DNR is hosting a public meeting to discuss a number of new proposed regulations covering deer hunting, fall wild turkey hunting, and waterfowl seasons. The meeting will be conducted over the Iowa Communications Network (ICN) on Thursday, April 3 from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

“This is an opportunity for our hunters and people who support wildlife to give us some feedback on these regulations,” said Richard Bishop, chief of the DNR’s wildlife bureau. “We will go over the proposed regulations and take comments from anyone willing to speak, then, if there is any time remaining, we will open the discussion to other topics.”

The changes to the deer rule include increasing the number of antlerless only permits and expansion of the January season.

Changes to the fall turkey hunting regulations include increasing the number of licenses available to hunters.

Waterfowl season changes include the addition of urban Canada goose hunting zones and possible changes in season dates and bag limits.

The DNR will have staff members from the wildlife bureau at each site to help with the meeting.

**ICN Locations:**

Marshalltown	Iowa Valley Community College, 3702 S. Center St., Room 806
Bettendorf	Scott Community College, 500 Belmont Road, Rooms 210 & 101
Boone	DMACC, 1125 Hancock Drive, Rooms 117 & 118
Mason City	NIACC, 500 College Dr., Room 128
Creston	Green Valley Area Education Agency 14, 1405 N. Lincoln, Turner Room
Sioux City	Western Hills Area Education Agency 14, 1520 Morningside Ave., Room 209A
Ottumwa	Ottumwa High School, 501 E 2 <sup>nd</sup> , Room 157
Burlington	Great River Area Education Agency 16, 3601 West Avenue Road
Fort Dodge	St Edmond High School, 501 N 22 <sup>nd</sup> St., Room 101
Council Bluffs	Iowa Western Community College, 2700 College Road, Room 3
Iowa City	West Senior High School, 2901 Melrose Ave., Room 20
Waterloo	Hawkeye Community College, 1501 E. Orange Road, Tama Hall
Spencer	Spencer Public Library, 21 East Third St.
Calmar	NE Iowa Community College Dairy Ed. Center, 1527 Hwy 150 South, Room 114

**For more information, contact Bishop at 515-281-6156.**

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**PATRICK COEN AWARDED BRASS BLUEGILL FOR 2003**

DES MOINES – Patrick Coen of Mt. Pleasant, is the recipient of the 2003 *Brass Bluegill Award*, presented each year to an instructor who has established an outstanding local program that exemplifies the goals of *Fish Iowa!* The award is co-sponsored by Pure Fishing and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources Aquatic Education Program.

Coen has been involved in the *Fish Iowa!* program since his first year of teaching. For 10 years he has included a four-week *Fish Iowa!* unit in his third-grade science class. Each year, some 25 students learn about fish anatomy and habitats and how to operate fishing poles, tie flies, and fillet fish. And, each year they go fishing. Many grandparents and parents help with the fishing excursions – fishing with the children, helping with poles and lures, and fixing lunch.

Last year, four graduating seniors from Coen's first third grade class also helped with the fishing trip. One of the graduates, Karen Weems, said, "Mr. Coen was my favorite teacher and I enjoyed his class a whole bunch – I still look up to him. I just think

this is a positive experience for kids and thought it would be fun to help out.” (Three of the four who helped plan to become teachers.)

Jill Colley, a resource room teacher at Mt. Pleasant, is also being recognized for her contribution to *Fish Iowa!* Colley teaches about 20 students in grades K-5. She tries to involve all the students at some level, but it’s the fourth and fifth graders who do the entire unit (seven or eight students each year). She does *Fish Iowa!* because “it teaches life skills my kids really take to, enjoy, and are successful with.” Colley has been a resource room teacher for 16 years.

Coen and Colley have teamed up to do fishing programs through the years. They did summer programs for upper elementary youth through the Mt. Pleasant Parks and Recreation Department and for talented and gifted children through their local area education agency. They also piloted the *Hooked on Fishing, Not on Drugs®* program in 1996-97 and assisted with revision of the *Fish Iowa!* teaching manual.

The Mt. Pleasant duo became mentors and started training other educators to do *Fish Iowa!* in 1995. Coen has trained 86 others to lead *Fish Iowa!* activities – teachers, pre-service teachers, county conservation board naturalists, youth leaders, home schoolers, park and recreation department employees, and even an outfitter. They represent 28 Iowa towns and 18 counties. He trained 33 people to do *Fish Iowa!* in 2002.

Colley also has trained several others to do *Fish Iowa!* Of course they have trained their co-workers at Mt. Pleasant – several classroom teachers use the materials as resources. They have trained the physical education teachers too. The new high school even has two ponds that have been stocked with fish.

Coen became the assistant principal at the Mt. Pleasant Middle School last fall. He is still very supportive of the program as an administrator. Colley recently received her degree in administration as well.

Pure Fishing, co-sponsor of the award since 1997, is committed to inspiring people to go fishing and helping them learn how to fish, where to fish, and what fishing tackle to use. Pure Fishing is the parent company of Berkley, Abu Garcia, Fenwick, Red Wolf, Mitchell, Johnson, and Spider. Their World Headquarters is in Spirit Lake, IA.

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## **SNOW GEESE ARE ON THEIR WAY**

By Joe Wilkinson

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

All it takes is a few days of mild temperatures and southerly breezes to start the clouds rolling north. Clouds of snow geese, that is. The annual mid-continent migration

has pushed as far as northwest Missouri. If this week's forecast holds, wave after wave of the light geese will touch down in Iowa on their way home to the Arctic coastlines of Hudson Bay.

But it's not 'home, sweet home' by any means. Years of overpopulation have destroyed one-third of their home range. The rest is in serious trouble, too. That's why waterfowl hunters in Iowa, and across the range of the snows, have enjoyed a rare spring hunting season for each of the last few years. And this year's bonus shooting is about to begin. "Daytime temperatures in the 40s and we are seeing snow melting," observes Guy Zenner, waterfowl biologist for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. "Snow geese will push the snow line north. As we see some sheet water appearing, we are going to see fair numbers of birds moving in the next two weeks."

That migration is the feathered equivalent of watching the dam burst. Hundreds of thousands of snow geese pour into the Riverton Wildlife Refuge and nearby wetlands through the Missouri River corridor. The cacophony of sound they make rings in your ears, even after you—or they—leave.

Those sheer numbers are the reason hunters have an extended season. A 'conservation order' from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service tacks on a few more weeks. It also removes key hunting restrictions, to encourage a larger harvest. Electronic calls are allowed. Shotgun magazine 'plugs' are removed. The daily bag limit is 20 'snows', with no season possession limit. "Snow geese have reached a level where they are destroying much of their breeding habitat up on the tundra," explains Zenner. "Colonies have grown to very large sizes; up to a half million nesting pairs in one place; destroying miles upon miles of coastline. The conservation order allows hunters more tools to take additional snow geese as they migrate north."

Wildlife biologists are fearful of a population crash, if the numbers don't stabilize. The snow goose glut is denuding the landscape; plants are overgrazed and then 'grubbed out' by the root to provide a little more nourishment to geese competing for food. The saline nature of the marsh means extremely slow recovery. Some say decades, others a century will pass before the habitat is restored...*if* the damage would stop immediately.

The harvest has increased. Zenner says it's a little premature, yet, to gauge the success of the liberal hunting option. "We have seen a continental harvest of 1.3 million on these light geese. That is what we feel is necessary to get the population to begin to come down. The Iowa harvest has been off and on, largely depending on the spring weather.

"Two weeks ago, we had birds for a day. A couple weeks prior to that, about a thousand showed up," recalls Carl Priebe, wildlife biologist for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources in southwest Iowa. "Until we show open water, though, they feed here, then go back south to roost."

When the waves of snow geese do start ebbing through, hunters need to be ready. “Hunters need to be scouting now,” stresses Zenner. “The birds roost on any open water; even an opening in a larger iced up lake, for instance. They feed in the fields, though. Scouting those feeding locations is essential.” Zenner says large sets of decoys—as in hundreds, not dozens—are also a big plus.

When the geese come, it is traditionally through western Iowa. However, reports from the Mississippi River corridor indicate smaller pockets of geese might migrate through Iowa’s ‘east coast’ this spring. Weather-watching waterfowlers want warm fronts and winds from the south; just the opposite of their dream *fall* forecast—for spring hunting opportunities.

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## **WOMEN IN THE OUTDOORS WORKSHOP**

WAPELLO – A Women in the Outdoors Workshop will held at Langwood Education Center on Saturday, April 12, from 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Langwood Education Center is located in southeast Iowa near Grandview.

Workshop participants may choose up to four different sessions to attend during the day. Sessions include high ropes challenge course, pistol shooting, trap shooting, archery, canoeing and kayaking, Leave No Trace camping, wild edibles, Native American skills, Global Positioning Systems (GPS) and compass use, backyard conservation, bird watching and wildlife photography, game care and uses, woodworking for wildlife and summer camp for kids at home.

This event is designed primarily for women, but anyone 14 years old and older may attend. Participants ages 14-17 are required to attend with an adult. Participants are encouraged to bring a daughter or a friend to share in the experience.

A \$45 registration fee includes activity fees, lunch, snacks and door prizes. Pre-registration and payment is requested by April 1.

The workshop is cosponsored by the Louisa County Conservation Board and the National Wild Turkey Federation. Contact the Louisa County Conservation Board at 319-523-8381 or [lccb@lccb.org](mailto:lccb@lccb.org) for more information or to receive a registration packet.

**For more information, contact Julie Ohde at 319-523-8381**

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## **BIRDS NEED HABITAT HELP**

Songbirds and game birds need trees and shrubs for protection in the winter, nesting sites in the spring, and escape cover year around. Landowners with some open land can provide bird habitat by planting tree and shrub seedlings. The Iowa DNR has three seedling packets available. The Songbird Packet features 16 shrub and 4 tree seedlings for \$20. There are also turkey packets and pheasant packets. Each packet contains 200 seedlings and cost \$90. The tree and shrub species have been selected attract a variety of birds the year round.

With spring approaching, now is the time order these habitat packets. Planting these seedlings is easy and inexpensive. For more information, go to [www.iowadnr.com/forestry](http://www.iowadnr.com/forestry) or call 800-865-2477.

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